

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 H-01
PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 OMB-01 PRS-01
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R 201440Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1924
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL LYON

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION ON
CONCORDE

REF: PARIS 10333

1. RPR DEPUTY HECTOR ROLLAND WAS RECEIVED AT
HIS REQUEST BY THE CHARGE ON APRIL 19 TO DISCUSS
THE PROPOSED PARLIAMENTARY TRIP TO THE US IN SUPPORT
OF CONCORDE (REFTEL). ROLLAND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY
FOUR OF HIS RPR COLLEAGUES FROM THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY: CHARLES BIGNON, RAYMOND OFFROY, GERARD
DELIAUNE, AND MME. D'HARCOURT. PIERRE BAUDIS,
INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN DEPUTY AND MAYOR OF TOULOUSE,
WAS ALSO SUPPOSED TO ATTEND, BUT, SAID ROLLAND,
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BAUDIS HAD BEEN DETAINED AT THE ASSEMBLY.

2. ROLLAND SAID THAT SOME SIXTY DEPUTIES HAD
THUS FAR RESPONDED TO HIS INITIATIVE AND HE EXPECTED
THAT ABOUT ONE HUNDRED DEPUTIES WOULD FINALLY BE
PREPARED TO MAKE THE TRIP TO THE US. HE THOUGHT
THAT WHILE IN THE US THE GROUP MIGHT TRY TO CALL

ON PRESIDENT CARTER AND ON GOV. CAREY, THOUGH APPOINTMENTS HAD NOT YET BEEN REQUESTED. WE ASKED WHETHER HE HAD DISCUSSED HIS IDEA WITH THE GOF. HE SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE, WHO HAD ASKED HIM NOT TO MAKE THE TRIP BEFORE APRIL 28 WHEN ORAL ARGUMENTS ARE TO BE HEARD IN THE NEW YORK LAWSUIT ON CONCORDE. (COMMENT: THIS CONFIRMS THAT THE GOF ENVISAGES NO FURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF THE COURT HEARING.) IF THE COURT DECISION IS FAVORABLE TO CONCORDE, THEN PLANS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARIANS' TRIP WOULD BE CANCELLED. IF THE COURT DECISION GOES AGAINST CONCORDE, THEN THE TRIP WOULD PRESUMABLY TAKE PLACE, PERHAPS ON MAY 21, ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF LINDBERGH'S LANDING IN PARIS.

3. THE AIM OF THE TRIP, SAID ROLLAND, WOULD BE TO MAKE US DECISION-MAKERS AND PUBLIC OPINION MORE SENSITIVE TO FRENCH CONCERNS OVER CONCORDE. YES, SAID ROLLAND, THE GROUP WOULD MARCH DOWN FIFTH AVENUE. ("WE WILL WEAR THE TRICOLOR SASH," BIGNON SAID AFTERWARDS SOMEWHAT TRUCULENTLY.) COURTESY PREVENTED US FROM ASKING OUTRIGHT "ARE YOU REALLY SERIOUS?", BUT WE SOUGHT TO GET THE POINT ACROSS BY REMARKING THAT THE IMPACT OF SUCH A GESTURE MIGHT BE LOST IN THE BIG CITY THAT IS NEW YORK. WE ALSO WONDERED WHAT EFFECT WOULD BE IN FRANCE IF A GROUP OF US CONGRESSMEN WERE TO PARADE DOWN THE CHAMPS-ELYSEE DEMANDING THAT AIR FRANCE BE AUTHORIZED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUY BOEING 737'S. WHEN ALL ROLLAND REPLIED WAS THAT FRANCE WAS NOT ASKING THE US TO BUY CONCORDE WE DECIDED THAT IT WAS PROBABLY HOPELESS TO TRY TO SHAKE HIM FROM HIS ILLUSIONS. WE DID TRY NEVER-THELESS ON A COUPLE OF OTHER OCCASIONS TO OPEN ROLLAND'S EYES A BIT WIDER, BUT TO NO AVAIL.

4. SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION OF THE CONCORDE ISSUE BROUGHT FORTH FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY SIDE MOST OF THE WELL-KNOWN ARGUMENTS. THE US WAS BEING UNFAIR AND WAS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY. A FEW CONCORDE FLIGHTS A DAY TO JFK WOULD MAKE NO OVER-ALL DIFFERENCE IN NOISE IMPACT ON THE NEARBY COMMUNITIES. THE NOISE ARGUMENT WAS ONLY A SUBTERFUGE ANYWAY. HOW COULD THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS PERMIT LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO USURP THEIR PREROGATIVES TO CONDUCT FOREIGN RELATIONS? IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER COULD NOT IMPOSE THE DECISION ON THE NEW YORK AUTHORITIES IF HE REALLY

WANTED TO, ESPECIALLY AT A TIME WHEN NEW YORK IS
IN SUCH DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS.

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5. THE PARLIAMENTARIANS PLACED SPECIAL STRESS
ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF THE CONCORDE
ISSUE. ROLLAND SAID THAT A GREAT MANY OF THE
DEPUTIES WHO HAD SIGNED UP FOR THE US TRIP CAME
FROM RURAL CONSTITUENCIES, WHICH ILLUSTRATED HOW
MUCH OF A TRULY NATIONAL ISSUE CONCORDE HAD BECOME
IN FRANCE. THE OPPOSITION WOULD BE QUICK TO EXPLOIT
AN UNFAVORABLE DECISION FOR CONCORDE
AT NEW YORK, WHICH COULD HAVE SERIOUS
CONSEQUENCES FOR THE MAJORITY PARTIES AND FOR THE
FUTURE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF FRANCE. THE
PARLIAMENTARIANS SAID THEY FAILED TO
COMPREHEND HOW THE USG COULD BE SO BLIND AS NOT
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TO SEE HOW FAILURE TO MAKE "SO LITTLE" A GESTURE AS PERMITTING CONCORDE TO LAND AT NEW YORK WOULD GENERATE A GROUNDSWELL OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN FRANCE. BIGNON WAS ESPECIALLY OUTSPOKEN ON THIS POINT, REMARKING THAT DESPITE HIS DEEP PRO-AMERICAN SENTIMENTS HE WOULD BE FORCED TO TURN AGAINST THE US AND TO ENCOURAGE HIS COLLEAGUES TO DO LIKEWISE. IF CONCORDE WERE TO BE REFUSED LANDING RIGHTS AT NEW YORK, HE SAID, HE AND THE GREAT MAJORITY OF MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, NEVER TOLERATE PURCHASE OF US AIRCRAFT FOR AIR FRANCE AND, HE COULD ASSURE US, A NUMBER OF OTHER CRITICAL ISSUES THAT WOULD COME BEFORE THE FRENCH PARLIAMENT WOULD NOT BE VOTED IN A MANNER THAT WOULD PLEASE THE USG. (DURING THE CONVERSATION POINTED ALLUSIONS WERE TWICE MADE TO NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION POLICY.)

6. WE MADE THE USUAL REBUTTAL, STRESSING THE SEPARATION OF POWERS IN THE US, THE STRENGTH OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COLEMAN DECISION, ETC., BUT WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS THAT WE MADE MUCH DENT IN THE PARLIAMENTARIANS' WAY OF VIEWING THE PROBLEM.

7. COMMENT: ROLLAND SAID HE WANTED TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US, SO WE WILL HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO MONITOR HOW THE PROJECT PROGRESSES AND PERHAPS HAVE SOME INFLUENCE ON THE ADVANCE PLANNING. FEW OBSERVERS BESIDES OURSELVES TOOK ROLLAND'S INITIATIVE SERIOUSLY AT THE OUTSET, PRECISELY BECAUSE IT CAME FROM HIM, BUT IT SEEMS TO HAVE GATHERED RESPECTABILITY ALONG WITH MOMENTUM. BIGNON'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE PROJECT IS A MAJOR PLUS FOR ROLLAND, SINCE BIGNON IS A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THOUGH ROLLAND SAID THE

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TRIP IS OPEN TO ALL DEPUTIES, INCLUDING THE OPPOSITION, IT LOOKS TO US AT THIS STAGE TO BE LARGELY AN RPR AFFAIR. THE RPR AS A PARTY MAY HAVE DECIDED TO EXPLOIT ROLLAND'S INITIATIVE SO THAT MORE OF THE POLITICAL CREDIT FOR DEFENDING CONCORDE WILL RUB OFF ON THE RPR AT THE EXPENSE OF THE OPPOSITION, BUT SINCE TODAY THE RPR IS THE

ONLY DYNAMIC FACTION LEFT AMONG THE MAJORITY
PARTIES IT IS PERHAPS ONLY NATURAL THAT
THE RPR WOULD CHOOSE TO TAKE THE LEAD.
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